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Bush Calls For Patience, Resolve in Face of Terror Threats
(Says arrests in U.K. due to international and interagency cooperation) (380)

Washington -- President Bush warned that the plot by more than 20 individuals in the United Kingdom to detonate liquid explosives aboard flights to the United States is "further evidence that the terrorists we face are sophisticated, and constantly changing their tactics." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060810101148idybeekcm0.7115747>).)

Speaking in his weekly radio address to the American public August 12, Bush praised the arrests of the would-be terrorists as "the culmination of hard work, cooperation, and information-sharing across different agencies and different governments," but he said that although the arrests "have significantly disrupted the threat ... we cannot be sure that the threat has been eliminated."

Bush called for "patience, cooperation, and vigilance" on the part of travelers in the coming days, saying, "The inconveniences you will face are for your protection, and they will give us time to adjust our screening procedures to meet the current threat."

Liquids have been temporarily banned as carry-on items on all flights. In addition, U.S. authorities have raised the threat warning for flights from the United Kingdom to the United States to the highest level, "Code Red," and issued a "Code Orange," the second highest threat level, for all domestic and international flights landing in the United States. The president said additional U.S. federal air marshals

have been sent to the United Kingdom to provide extra protection aboard flights to the United States. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060810101148idybeekcm0.7115747>).)

The president said the United States "is safer than it was" prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but the danger of terrorism remains.

"This week's experience reminds us of a hard fact: The terrorists have to succeed only once to achieve their goal of mass murder, while we have to succeed every time to stop them," he said.

Bush called for "patience, courage, and untiring resolve," and said the terrorists seeking to kill innocent civilians "need to know that America, Great Britain, and our allies are determined to defend ourselves and advance the cause of liberty."

The full transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/08/20060812.html>) of the president's radio address can be found at the White House Web site.

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*WPD102 08/14/2006

Majority of Iraqi Police Trained, Equipped, General Says
(Iraqi army, police security forces, both national and local, called key to success) (470)

Washington -- Iraqi Interior Ministry forces have reached 92 percent of a planned strength of 188,000 troops, the commander of the coalition's Civilian Police Assistant Training Team says.

The Iraqi police included in that total are 90 percent trained and 83 percent equipped, according to Major General Joe Peterson. The National Police, which used to be called the Special Police, are 98 percent trained and 92 percent equipped, he continued. Peterson briefed along with Army Major General William Caldwell, spokesman for Multi-National Force - Iraq, from Baghdad, Iraq, August 14 via videoconference to the Pentagon.

Also included under the Interior Ministry are Department of Border Enforcement police, which are now 92 percent trained though just 56 percent equipped, Peterson said. He explained that the border police lag because resources have gone more to those forces in contested areas.

"[W]e estimate that all of this will be completed by December of this year [2006]," Peterson added. "So that's all on track."

In his opening remarks, General Caldwell said that the "Iraqi security forces are the key to the success in this country, both the Iraqi army and the police forces, both the national and the local. ... that is a key ingredient ... for the coalition forces to draw down their presence."

However, Caldwell continued, the military and police components are not enough.

"It's going to take the commitment of the Iraqi government through governance, through economics and most importantly, the will and determination of the Iraqi people themselves," he said.

Caldwell noted that Baghdad needs long-term solutions, and that the extremists there will be defeated neither easily nor quickly.

"Challenges will ensue, but efforts will march forward block by block," he said.

According to Caldwell, what really matters is businesses reopening and staying open, refurbishing the stalls in the marketplace section by section, improving drainage, removing rubbish and allowing children on summer break outside to ride bicycles and play. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060809173744idybeekcm0.1926538>).)

Caldwell began the briefing by noting a series of explosions that occurred August 13 on the Karrada peninsula at the Zaafaraniyah district. In spite of speculation that the cause was a car bomb, he said, a U.S. explosive ordnance disposal team examined the site and made a preliminary assessment that an initial natural gas explosion led to subsequent explosions.

Further investigation is ongoing, Caldwell said, but available evidence so far points to an internal gas explosion that set off a series of other explosions at that location.

The transcript (http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2111&Itemid=30) and video (http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/stories/Press_briefings/2006/Aug/mg_caldwell_14aug06.wmv) of the briefing, as well as slides (http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/stories/Press_briefings/2006/Aug/060814_slides.pdf) (PDF, 14 pages) used in the briefing, are available on the Web site of Multi-National Force - Iraq (<http://www.mnf-iraq.com/>).

For further information, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html).

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*WPD103 08/14/2006

Cease-Fire in Lebanon "Important Step Forward," Bush Says
(Says government control of southern Lebanon marks "defeat" for Hezbollah) (600)

Washington -- President Bush, speaking at the State Department August 14, welcomed the adoption of the U.N. Security Council resolution on Lebanon and the implementation of a cease-fire in the region as "an important step forward" and said the next task is helping "people in both Lebanon and Israel return to their homes and begin rebuilding their lives without fear of renewed violence and terror."

Recalling the suffering of civilians in both countries during the recent weeks of violence, Bush said he believes that "responsibility for this suffering lies with Hezbollah," for its "unprovoked attack" against Israel that started the conflict. He also accused Hezbollah of "hiding behind civilians."

Bush also said Syria and Iran, as the state sponsors and supporters of Hezbollah, also share responsibility for the suffering of the Lebanese people. Hezbollah was "emboldened" by its state sponsors, and despite claims by both countries to the contrary, "sophisticated weaponry ended up in the hands of Hezbollah fighters, and many assume and many believe that that weaponry came from Iran through Syria."

The president said "the world must now recognize that it's Iranian sponsorship of Hezbollah that exacerbated the situation in the Middle East," and he accused Syria of supporting the organization in order to undermine Lebanon's democratic government and "regain its position of dominance in the country."

DEFEAT FOR HEZBOLLAH

However, Bush said the fighting had dealt a blow to Hezbollah, because it would no longer be able to operate freely in southern Lebanon, since Lebanese forces will be taking control of the area with the support of a "robust" international force, according to the terms set by the U.N. Security Council, and agreed to by the governments of Lebanon and Israel.

"[H]ow can you claim victory when at one time you were a state within a state, safe within southern Lebanon, and now you're going to be replaced by a Lebanese army and an international force?" Bush asked.

The president said the region now stands "at a pivotal moment in history," and the recent fighting showed the determination of extremists to prevent "modern societies from emerging" in the Middle East.

"Yet millions of people in Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere are equally determined to live in peace and freedom. They have tired of the false promises and grand illusions of radical extremists," he said, and reject their "hateful vision" in favor of a better future.

"We're determined to help them achieve that dream," he said.

He said the current challenge is to help young democracies in the region, such as Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan, overcome their vulnerability to terrorists and their sponsors.

"One vulnerability is that many of the new democratic governments in the region have not yet established effective control over all their territory," he said.

Bush said his administration has a clear message to those opposed to the spread of democracy in the region. "America will stay on the offense against al-Qaida. Iran must stop its support for terror. And the leaders of these armed groups must make a choice. If they want to participate in the political life of their country, they must disarm. Elected leaders cannot have one foot in the camp of democracy and one foot in the camp of terror," he said.

The transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/08/20060814-3.html>) of the president's remarks is available on the White House Web site.

For additional information, see Response to Terrorism (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.html).

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*WPD104 08/14/2006

White House Hails Diplomatic Success in Mideast Conflict

(Looks forward to strengthened Lebanese government in wake of cease-fire) (540)

By David Shelby

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah is a victory for diplomacy, according to White House press secretary Tony Snow.

Speaking to reporters in Washington just hours after the cease-fire took effect the morning of August 14, Snow said both parties appear to be respecting the agreed-upon cessation of hostilities.

"[W]e've had statements coming out that indicate that people say that they're not going to abide by it, but so far they have. No rockets fired by Hezbollah today. And we hope that everybody will stay true to the cease-fire," he said.

Snow said the August 11 U.N. Security Council resolution calling for an end to the violence reflects the diplomatic goals of President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to support the Lebanese government in its efforts to extend its sovereign control over the entire territory of Lebanon and to put an end to Hezbollah aggression. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060812102805atiayduj0.6109234>).)

He said that the United States is "hoping that the people of Lebanon will be the ultimate victors" as their democratic government is strengthened and the Hezbollah militia is deprived of its ability to pursue an independent foreign policy.

"[W]e want not only for the cease-fire to hold, but to set in train the kind of events that are going to get us to where we want to be, which is a freestanding, democratic government in Lebanon that no longer has to worry about provocations that are waged within its borders by a militia that does not represent the people of Lebanon," he said.

Snow said the 15,000 international troops that will deploy alongside the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon will play a key role in ensuring that the situation does not revert to its previous status. He said these troops must be capable of intercepting and interrupting arms shipments from Syria and Iran to Hezbollah militants.

Snow said the United States would like to see Hezbollah disarmed in compliance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, but he added that this would be a long-term undertaking of the Lebanese government and the international forces.

Neither Snow nor State Department spokesman Sean McCormack offered a timeline for the deployment of the international forces, but McCormack said, "[W]e obviously want to see that force generated as quickly as possible." He said he expects interested countries to hold a force-contributors conference at the United Nations in the near future.

Snow said the United States would not send ground troops to participate in the international stabilization force but might offer logistical support.

The monthlong conflict has focused international attention on the roles of Iran and Syria in supporting and arming Hezbollah, fomenting violence and "trying to foil the democratic aspirations of people in Lebanon," the press secretary said.

"That's an important advancement because it does make clear who's responsible, not only on the ground but regionally, for supporting the kind of violence that we have seen," he said.

McCormack said the full implementation of the Security Council resolution will be strategic setback for Iran and Syria.

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*WPD105 08/14/2006

Global Cooperation Against Corruption Can Bring Solid Results
(Georgia, Indonesia and Peru are reforming, U.S. officials say) (910)

By Andrzej Zwanecki
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- With an emerging global framework for combating corruption as a basis, countries can make anti-corruption efforts more effective through vigorous implementation of anti-corruption commitments and enhanced international cooperation, U.S. State Department officials say.

The emerging framework is made up of the U.N. Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials as well as several regional agreements, according to David Luna, director for anti-corruption and governance initiatives, and John Brandolino, director of the anti-crime programs division.

By imposing specific obligations, pacts such as the UNCAC encourage countries to deal more responsibly with corruption and related governance issues domestically and globally through international cooperation, Luna said in an August 8 interview with the Washington File.

It also requires moving beyond rhetoric and nominal measures, he said.

"What is needed now are action and results -- a commitment to prosecute corrupt officials, to enforce anticorruption laws and to uphold the rule of law," Luna said.

Brandolino said in the same interview that the United States and other nations -- through peer-review mechanisms, diplomacy and technical assistance -- increasingly have been encouraging countries committed to these goals to move toward more effective implementation of anti-corruption measures, including more effective enforcement. The Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) has offered a strong incentive to practice good governance by making development aid channeled through this program conditional to a large degree on a steadfast anti-corruption commitment, he said. (See Millennium Challenge Account (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html).)

Yet the progress among the 12 countries that receive U.S. technical assistance to strengthen institutions and investigate and prosecute corruption cases has been uneven, and reforms undertaken by some have yet to bear fruit, according to an April State Department report.

Georgia, Indonesia and Peru are among countries the report praised for taking concrete and consistent steps to address corruption. Bangladesh and Kenya are cited as those where anti-corruption reforms stalled.

"The passage of laws or issuance of regulations alone does not necessarily always lead to a decrease in corruption," it said. "Only active implementation of laws, effective enforcement, sound policies, and strong rule-of-law programs, combined with political and popular will to demand accountability, will bring about enduring change."

CLAMP DOWN ON CORRUPT OFFICIALS AND CORRUPTORS

U.S. anti-corruption policies go beyond the existing multilateral and bilateral contacts, however. The recently announced National Strategy to Internationalize Efforts Against Kleptocracy, for example, aims at involving many international partners, including multilateral financial institutions, Luna said. A kleptocracy is a government in which officials seek status and personal gain at the expense of the governed. (See a related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060810173046SAikceinawz0.1426355>).)

He said the United States will work with the Group of Eight large industrialized countries and other committed partners to test the political resolve of the international community to fight large-scale high-level corruption and ensure accountability "in a way that transforms communities and offers new hope to those who strive for greater integrity and openness of a more honest, responsible government."

The kleptocracy initiative will help to achieve these objectives by synchronizing and leveraging U.S. enforcement and assistance capabilities, including through international cooperation and effective public-private partnerships, Luna said. A coalition of committed governments can assist others to take more vigorous efforts to investigate and prosecute high-level corrupt officials, shut them out of the financial system and deny them safe haven, he said.

Brandolino said the U.S. government has led the way in the fight against grand corruption with the 2004 presidential proclamation to deny safe haven to corrupt foreign officials. Under this authority, dozens of such officials have been denied entry to the United States, he said.

"But if only we do our part and other governments don't, corrupt people will go elsewhere," Brandolino said. "So we try to get everybody to realize that we all must close our countries to corrupt officials."

He said the administration is encouraged by international cooperation on another part of the corruption problem -- going after private firms who bribe foreign public officials.

"We are cooperating and getting more cooperation than ever from our counterparts all over the world," Brandolino said.

Since the 1970s, the United States has investigated and prosecuted more companies than any other country, Brandolino said. Under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (Public Law 105-366), which makes it a federal crime to bribe foreign government officials for business purposes, it significantly has increased the number of cases prosecuted since 2001, according to the Justice Department.

Some other OECD countries do not do enough, however, according to a June Transparency International report. Two-thirds of countries surveyed have achieved little or no enforcement since the OECD anti-bribery convention came into force in 1999, the report said.

Despite that, Brandolino sees progress in the increasing number of countries that have taken significant enforcement actions in the past two years.

"I would hope this is a beginning of an upward trend," he said.

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/rpt/67762.htm>) of the State Department report on anti-corruption efforts in selected countries can be viewed on the department's Web site. The full text (<http://www.transparency-usa.org/documents/TISecundOECDProgressReportFinal.pdf>) (PDF, 22 pages) of the 2006 Transparency International progress report on the enforcement of the OECD convention is available on the organization's U.S. chapter's Web site.

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*WPD106 08/14/2006

China Reports Human Bird Flu Death with Unknown Infection Source
(Additional case detected in Indonesia, but patient survives) (470)

Washington – The Ministry of Health in China reports another human death attributed to the highly pathogenic avian influenza strain H5N1, but the source of the patient's infection is proving difficult to identify.

This most recent case – China's 21st reported human case since 2003 – is of a 62-year-old male farmer from Xinjiang who developed symptoms on June 19 and died on July 12. Attribution of his death to the H5N1 strain that has killed almost 140 people worldwide was only confirmed after a second round of

specimen tests, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report, which verified the announcement from China.

This strain of flu has killed hundreds of millions of birds as it has charged across Asia and most recently into Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Among the countless occasions that humans have been exposed to ailing birds, almost 240 cases of human sickness have been detected, resulting in 139 deaths.

International health officials warn that the virus could mutate to become more contagious among humans, a development that could lead to a global influenza pandemic.

Because of that threat, health officials are concerned about looking at every human infection and identifying how or where the individual might have come into contact with the virus, and who else might have been exposed. In many cases, the path of exposure has been obvious -- the patient was known to have handled or slaughtered birds that demonstrated visible signs of illness.

In this most recent case in China, the source of infection is not so obvious. The WHO reports that the disease investigators have been unable to find that the Xinjiang farmer had a history of exposure to dead or ailing birds, and no recent outbreaks had been reported in the vicinity of the man's home.

The inability of the epidemiological team to trace the infection could suggest that the man's exposure came through some vector that has not been identified previously.

A SURVIVING PATIENT IN INDONESIA

The Ministry of Health in Indonesia reported the survival of a 17-year-old male from West Java Province after more than two weeks of sickness with respiratory symptoms. When he was admitted to the hospital August 9, health care workers suspected H5N1 because of the young man's exposure to poultry and the presentation of his symptoms.

Tests resulted confirmed August 12 that the young man now recovering was infected with H5N1, according to an August 14 WHO report.

The United States is one of the world's leading international donors helping vulnerable nations respond to the threat of bird flu. (See fact sheet (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=June&x=20060703145105cmretrop0.4437372>).)

For ongoing coverage of the disease and international efforts to combat it, see Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html).

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*WPD107 08/14/2006

U.S. Passports Move into a New Era

(Electronic passports are designed to improve security, facilitate travel) (380)

Washington – The U.S. Department of State began issuing electronic passports – e-passports – to the American public August 14 as another step in an ongoing program to enhance border security and to facilitate travel.

The new generation of passports includes biometric technology, a computer chip that contains the same data as those found on the biographic data page of the passport. Those data include name, gender, date and place of birth, and the passport's issue and expiration dates. The chip also includes a digital image of the bearer's photograph.

The document is scanned by border officials when the bearer presents it, and the data in the document are matched against that stored away in databases. Its design also is intended to defy forgery and falsification.

In a Washington File interview earlier in 2006, State Department Consular Affairs spokeswoman Laura Tischler said the United States is leading global efforts to ensure the e-passport "is a secure, globally interoperable document that meets [international] standards."

The International Civil Aviation Organization has devised standards for the making of passports in the digital age, and most nations now are redesigning their documents to comply with that standard.

Discussing the benefits of the e-passport, Tischler said the document prevents fraud and protects identity. "[I]f stolen, it makes it incredibly difficult for someone else to use your passport. [The e-passport] gives border inspectors a new tool to verify you are the person to whom a given government issued that document," she said.

The new U.S. e-passport also is designed to protect the privacy of the bearer, Tischler said. "The information contained on the integrated circuit embedded in the passport will not provide a means to track U.S. citizens. This information will be used only in identity verification at ports of entry during travel."

To prevent data written to the chip from being susceptible to unauthorized reading, Tischler said that "anti-skimming" shielding material has been incorporated in the passports front cover. That material prevents the chip from being read when the passport book is closed, she said.

Additional information (http://travel.state.gov/passport/eppt/eppt_2498.html) on the U.S. electronic passport is available on the State Department Web site.

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*WPD108 08/14/2006

State's Boucher Looks to Positive Relationship with Kyrgyzstan
(Assistant secretary cites anti-terror, economic and democratic initiatives) (790)

By Louise Fenner
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington - The United States and Kyrgyzstan are looking beyond a recent diplomatic spat toward the continuation of "a broad and positive relationship," Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher told reporters in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, after meeting with Kyrgyz leaders August 11.

"I think you will see a lot of cooperation in a lot of areas with the United States and Kyrgyzstan," said Boucher, who heads the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. He cited security, anti-terrorism and economic cooperation, "including some of the big projects linking the region with energy," as well as economic and democratic reforms inside Kyrgyzstan.

Regarding the recent action by Kyrgystan to deport two U.S. Embassy employees and the U.S. decision to declare two Washington-based Kyrgyz diplomats persona non grata, Boucher said "there is no need for anyone to do anything more."

The steps taken against the U.S. diplomats were based on bad information and false accusations, he said. "The thing we really need to do is to make sure that the false information and false stories don't disrupt our relationship. And that is how we will proceed." (For additional information (

http://kyrgyz.usembassy.gov/july_11_2006-press_statement.html), see statement on U.S. Embassy Bishkek Web site.)

Boucher explained that a July 14 agreement on continued coalition use of the Manas ["Ganci"] Air Base to support the war on terrorism in Afghanistan is not a new pact but an extension of the agreement that has been in place since 2001 with "slightly new terms" for financing. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=200607181303541cjsamoht0.1731989>).)

"The base is a joint effort by the United States and Kyrgyzstan to make this region safer," he said, adding that "there are a lot of different economic benefits to Kyrgyzstan from the base and the overall relationship."

Boucher also said the United States is not concerned about Kyrgyzstan's cooperation with Russia and China. "We are not here to play games or to contend for influence with different countries, we are here to provide additional options," he said, "so that these countries all have partners and routes, and import markets and export markets north, south, east and west."

In addition, the assistant secretary expressed U.S. disappointment at Kyrgyzstan's decision to return four Uzbek asylum seekers to Uzbekistan, calling it "a troubling step."

"There is no telling, in fact, perhaps, no way of knowing what is going to happen to these people," he said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=March&x=200603031346461CJsamohT0.8994257&t=eur/eur-latest.html>).)

He noted that before arriving in Kyrgyzstan, he traveled to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, for "very long and serious" discussions with Uzbek leaders. Both sides identified some areas of potential cooperation and "steps each of us can take to start that cooperation again," he said, adding, "I can't tell you yet how it is going to turn out." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060811161006MVyelwarC0.9370844>).)

Asked about corruption and crime in Kyrgyzstan, Boucher said they are "serious problems and there's a lot of work that has to be done. I've talked to business people, I've talked to ordinary citizens," he said, "even government officials have said the same thing."

The United States is supporting "economic reforms and training that decrease the opportunities for corruption," he said.

"We're working with the police to improve their professionalism," he added. "And we're considering programs to help the judiciary and law enforcement officials make significant changes to eliminate corruption there."

Even though such programs are helpful, Boucher said, "in the end it's the determination of the government and of the people of Kyrgyzstan to stop the corruption and stop the crime that's going to matter, and we can't bring that from outside."

During his visit, Boucher spoke at the opening of the Forensics Center of the Kyrgyz Police School, which is expected to train over 1,000 officers each year in forensic techniques such as fingerprinting and evidence collection and evaluation.

"This school can help build support for the rule of law, it can help foster a culture of lawfulness, and ultimately promote the democratic stability of Kyrgyzstan. It can also play an important role in professional development and professional development is one of the ways to fight against corruption," he said.

The full text (http://kyrgyz.usembassy.gov/boucher_forensics_center_.html) of Boucher's statement at the Forensics Center and a transcript (http://kyrgyz.usembassy.gov/boucher_press_august_11.html) of his remarks to the press are available on the Web site of the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek.

Democratic and economic reforms and anti-corruption efforts are the focus of U.S. assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic for fiscal year 2005. For additional information, see a fact sheet (<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/51369.htm>) on the State Department Web site.

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*WPD109 08/14/2006

Weekly Review of Developments in Human Rights and Democracy
(Bush anti-corruption initiative; State's Boucher visit to Uzbekistan; extradition of Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan; media freedom cases in Ukraine; Agabeili defamation case in Azerbaijan; continued imprisonment of Muradova in Turkmenistan) (1150)

Following are some of the most significant recent U.S. government policy pronouncements, hearings and reports on human rights and democracy concerning Eurasia, as well as some noteworthy materials released by international organizations and nongovernmental organizations:

For additional coverage of the topics listed below and related issues, see Europe and Eurasia (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur>).

U.S. INITIATIVE SEEKS TO BOOST FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

The Bush administration announced a U.S. initiative to shut corrupt officials out of the global financial system, deny them safe havens, and recover and return proceeds from their crimes. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060810173046SAikceinawz0.1426355>).)

"Our objective is to defeat high-level public corruption in all its forms and to deny corrupt officials access to the international financial system as a means of defrauding their people and hiding their ill-gotten gains," President Bush said August 10.

The initiative is called the National Strategy to Internationalize Efforts Against Kleptocracy. A kleptocracy is a government in which officials seek status and personal gain at the expense of the governed.

The full text (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/08/20060810.html>) of the president's statement and a White House fact sheet (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/08/20060810-1.html>) are available on the White House Web site.

STATE'S BOUCHER VISITS UZBEKISTAN, OFFERS COOPERATION, CRITICISM

The United States has had "continuing problems" and "strong differences" with Uzbekistan but wants to maintain a dialogue with that government, said Richard Boucher, assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia. He visited Tashkent, Uzbekistan, August 9 to discuss such issues as narcotics trafficking, terrorism and human rights. It was the first visit to Tashkent by a senior U.S. official since September 2005. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060811161006MVyelwarC0.9370844>).)

"We obviously have very strong differences about the [May 2005] events in Andijon and the human rights situation," Boucher said during a news conference in Tashkent.

He said the United States wants “to establish a new basis for cooperation” with Uzbekistan. “We agreed that we do have common interests in security issues, fighting terrorism, drugs, proliferation and things like that. We have interests in economic and business cooperation and all of the things that go with such cooperation. And we have an interest in the economic and political development of a healthy society here.”

RIGHTS GROUPS DEPLORE KYRGYZ DECISION TO EXTRADITE UZBEKS

Independent international human rights groups expressed strong disappointment and concern after the Kyrgyz government announced August 9 that it was extraditing five Uzbek citizens to Uzbekistan.

Fayezjon Tajihalilov, Jahongir Maksudov, Rasul Pirmatov, Odiljon Rahimov and Yakub Tashbaev were driven to the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border near Dostuk and there turned over to Uzbek authorities, who wanted them in connection with the May 2005 violence in the Uzbek city of Andijon. Tajihalilov sought asylum in Kyrgyzstan, while the other four were refugees.

In an open letter to Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) denounced the extradition as contrary to Kyrgyzstan’s obligations under international law because the Uzbeks face serious risk that Uzbek authorities will violate their human rights.

"The decision by the Kyrgyz authorities to send these individuals back to Uzbekistan, one of the world's most repressive regimes, is shocking," said Freedom House Executive Director Jennifer Windsor August 11. "To forcibly return those who seek refuge and asylum to a government which routinely employs torture, and ignores due process, demonstrates a lack of regard for international standards of human rights on the part of the Kyrgyz government."

"The Kyrgyz government has deliberately and forcibly sent refugees back to Uzbekistan, where they face likely torture and persecution," said Human Rights Watch’s Holly Cartner August 9. "This is an appalling move that sets a terrible precedent throughout the region. We condemn it in the strongest terms."

The United Nations, the European Union and the United States had urged Kyrgyzstan not to extradite the Uzbeks. Kyle Scott of the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on June 15 urged Kyrgyzstan “to be mindful of its OSCE commitments” concerning the protection of refugees. (The full text (http://osce.usmission.gov/archive/2006/06/Uzbek_06_15_06.pdf) of his statement is available on the USOSCE Web site.)

The IHF statement (http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=6941), the Freedom House statement (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=405>) and the Human Rights Watch statement (<http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2006/08/09/kyrgyz13950.htm>) are available on the groups’ Web sites.

The Uzbekistan section (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61684.htm>) of the State Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices is available on the department’s Web site.

PRESS FREEDOM IN UKRAINE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The cases of Oleg Lyashko, former editor of the independent Kyiv weekly Polityka, and of Margarita Zakora, editor of the weekly newspaper Dzerzhynets, have put the international spotlight on press freedom in Ukraine.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled August 10 that Ukraine violated press freedom rights in convicting Lyashko in 2001 on criminal defamation charges stemming from a series of stories about two government officials. (See statement (<http://www.cpj.org/news/2006/europe/ukraine11aug06na.html>) on the Web site of the Committee to Protect Journalists.)

Zakora's case is one of ongoing legal and personal harassment resulting from her articles alleging corruption on the part of judges, police and local members of parliament.

"We demand that the legal action against her be dropped and that she and her family be given official protection," the international press freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RWB) said August 11. "It is disgraceful that despite evidence, police refuse to investigate the attacks on her." (The full text (http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=18557) of the statement is available on the RWB Web site.)

PRESS FREEDOM GROUP ALARMED AT DEFAMATION CASE IN AZERBAIJAN

The Committee to Protect Journalists expressed alarm August 10 over the conviction and sentencing of an Azerbaijani editor for criminal defamation of a leader of the ruling party.

Shakhin Agabeili, editor-in-chief of Milli Yol, was sentenced to a year in prison despite the fact he neither wrote the offending article nor was editor at the time of its publication, according to a source cited by CPJ. (For more details, see statement (<http://www.cpj.org/news/2006/europe/azer10aug06na.html>) on CPJ Web site.)

TURKMEN RFE/RL CORRESPONDENT MURADOVA STILL IMPRISONED

A Turkmen correspondent for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Ogulsapar Muradova, has now been held in a prison in Turkmenistan for more than seven weeks, without charge and without access to legal counsel.

RFE/RL acting President Jeff Trimble said, "even by Turkmenistan standards, this is blatant disregard for the law," adding that "RFE/RL will continue to do all it can to secure Ogulsapar Muradova's release, no matter how long it takes."

No one has seen Muradova since she was taken away by police June 18. Her three adult children were arrested the next day and held for nearly two weeks, also without charges, before being released July 1. (For additional information, see the RFE/RL press release (<http://www.rferl.org/releases/2006/08/429-090806.asp>) on the organization's Web site.)

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*WPD110 08/14/2006

Byliner: United States Helping Kazakhstan Get Safe Drinking Water
(International partnership helps local people in creating sustainable water supplies) (630)

The following article by Judith E. Ayres, assistant administrator of international affairs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, was published in the Washington File August 14. There are no republication restrictions.

(begin byliner)

Safe Drinking Water: U.S. Helps People Turn on the Tap

By Judith E. Ayres
Assistant Administrator of International Affairs
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

More than 1 billion people worldwide still lack access to safe-drinking water, and over 3 billion people each year suffer from water-related diseases. In response, the United States is trying a radically different

approach in its work with individual countries and groups to provide clean drinking water for all people. In 2006, an EPA-led Clean Water Financing Program reached the 10,000 person milestone in bringing safe drinking water to people in the Almaty region of Kazakhstan, using a novel method that promotes village ownership and participation in clean water resources. The United States hopes the Kazakhstan project will serve as a model for sustainable water development projects in other countries.

In order to make the effort sustainable over the long term, the project ensured that local villages took control, both by investing in a revolving water fund and being trained to maintain and manage the water purification systems for the future. The chairman of the Kazakhstan national water committee recently announced on national television that Kazakhstan will adopt this method and apply it throughout the country.

Clean water is fundamental to the health and well being of the people of Kazakhstan. By working to promote local control, user financing and decision-making, EPA and its partners are helping to ensure that communities will have a sustainable source of clean drinking water far into the future.

To date the project has provided approximately 10,000 people in eight villages with access to safe drinking water. By the end of 2007, 12 villages in the Almaty region, with a total of 15,000-20,000 people, should have clean water. Health benefits of the project are estimated to be a 50-60 percent decrease in water-borne diseases.

A critical component of this program is advancing self-governance while promoting a sense of ownership of public assets within target communities. An elected Village Water Committee is responsible for all system operation and maintenance. The villagers also agree to pay user fees to cover all of the system's operating and 10 percent of the construction cost. The individual villages' water systems then join to create a Regional Finance Cooperative to provide funding for major repairs, parts, capital improvements and expansion, and to manage a Circuit Rider Program.

Co-sponsored by the Global Environment and Technology Foundation's (GETF) International Center for Environmental Finance (ICEF), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Phillip Morris Corporation, and others, the initiative seeks to reverse declining access to safe drinking water in rural Kazakhstan. Most drinking water systems in Kazakhstan built during the Soviet period have not been maintained and are unusable.

Kazakhstan has made significant progress toward developing a market economy, for which it was recognized by the United States in 2002. The country has enjoyed significant economic growth since 2000, partly due to its large oil, gas, and mineral reserves. A recent visit by Vice President Cheney highlighted the strategic partnership between the United States and Kazakhstan.

For the next two to three years, EPA and its partners will work with the Kazakh government to develop 500 new village water systems scheduled to be built with Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan funds in the North Kazakhstan, West Kazakhstan, and Akmola oblasts.

(Additional information is available on the Global Environment and Technology Foundation (<http://www.getf.org/>) and the International Center for Environmental Finance (<http://www.environmentalfinance.net/>) Web sites.)

(end byliner)

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*WPD111 08/14/2006
Treasury Will Send Financial Representative to Southeast Asia

(New post intended to increase direct U.S. engagement with ASEAN countries) (400)

Washington -- In pursuit of greater direct engagement with the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the U.S. Department of the Treasury has announced that it will establish a post for a financial representative in Southeast Asia.

Robert Kimmitt, deputy secretary of the Treasury, said the United States is committed to maintaining strong ties with the countries of the region.

Speaking at a celebration of Singapore's National Day in Washington August 9, Kimmitt introduced financial expert Susan Baker as the first nominee to the new position.

Baker has worked in the region as a consultant for the World Bank and a financial analyst in the private sector. She also spent time at the Indonesian Ministry of Finance through a program sponsored by Harvard University.

A Treasury spokesman said the new financial representative will be based in the region, but an exact location for the office has not yet been determined.

The department's announcement follows in the footsteps of other U.S. government initiatives to strengthen ties with ASEAN and increase emphasis on the Southeast Asia region.

On July 27, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed an implementation framework for the "ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership," a five-year plan for cooperation in the areas of security, economic development and education. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060731113613ASesuarK0.1748163>).)

In October 2002, the Bush administration launched the "Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative," which was intended to increase trade and investment flows between ASEAN countries and the United States and to lay the groundwork for negotiation of a trade and investment framework agreement (TIFA). (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2002&m=October&x=20021028111946gomez@pd.state.gov0.1174127>).)

Cumulatively, the 10 ASEAN nations -- Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam -- are the United States' third-largest export market and have received tens of billions of dollars in U.S. direct investment.

Kimmitt said the United States has pushed for increased recognition of Asia's importance in the global economy and "led the effort to give Asian economies greater voice" in international financial institutions.

"Even as China, India, and other economies grow, the United States can and will continue to serve as a force for stability and growth in Asia," he said.

The full text (<http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/hp57.htm>) of Kimmitt's remarks can be found at the Treasury Department's Web site.

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*WPD112 08/14/2006

Business Leaders Address North American Economic Competitiveness
(Council examining ways to lower business costs, reduce regional trade barriers) (550)

Washington – Senior business representatives from United States, Mexico and Canada plan to define priorities and discuss specific recommendations for enhancing North American competitiveness in an August 15 session of the North American Competitiveness Council (NACC) in Washington, officials say.

U.S. President Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mexican President Vicente Fox announced the creation of the NACC in March to provide recommendations on issues concerning North American competitiveness that could be addressed through the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP).

U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, Mexican Economy Minister Sergio Garcia de Alba and Canadian Minister of Industry Maxime Bernier met with North American business leaders to officially launch the NACC on June 15.

The NACC comprises high-level business leaders from each country who meet regularly with senior North American government officials to examine how the SPP could help companies in the three countries be more competitive in the global market and reduce the cost of doing business, and offer specific recommendations to cut red tape or eliminate unnecessary barriers to trade in North America. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=June&x=20060615144707ASrelliM0.9325373&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>).)

As part of this process, the North American business leaders will convene at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington August 15 to discuss the proposed priorities and recommended action items to be submitted to regional officials at the next SPP ministerial.

The U.S. section of the NACC, for which the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Council of the Americas serve as the secretariat, developed a set of recommendations in areas including standards and regulatory cooperation, border security and infrastructure, trade facilitation and customs reform, innovation, external dimension and energy integration. More than 200 U.S. associations and companies contributed to the recommendations that will be presented during the NACC trilateral meeting, according to Luis Pinto, director of external affairs at the Council of the Americas. These recommendations, he added, "look not only at issues of immediate importance but also to providing medium- to long-term suggestions."

Adrean Rothkopf, director of trade policy for the Western Hemisphere at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said that the NACC offers the leaders of the North American private sector an important opportunity to collaborate both with each other and with the leaders in their governments to the benefit of the region.

"If we work together – focus on our shared agenda, willingly tackle tough issues, commit ourselves to seeking solutions rather than merely identifying problems – the NACC will become a vital instrument for our countries' leaders and an important tool for all its peoples, its workers and its companies," she said.

Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Frank Lavin said that the NACC can play an important role in the region.

"The more competitive North America is in the world economy, the better off U.S. businesses will be," he said. "We look forward to receiving the NACC's priorities for the SPP, as well as its recommendations on how governments can partner with the private sector to enhance the competitive position of North American firms in the global marketplace."

For additional information, see Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/americas/mexico/trilateral_meeting.html).

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*WPD113 08/14/2006

New U.S. Policy Aims To Support Cuban Families' Reunification
(United States continues to discourage massive influx of Cuban refugees) (560)

By Lauren Monsen
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced changes to its existing policy that will support the reunification of families separated by the regime of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro by reducing the backlog for those waiting for family-based immigrant visas, according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

USCIS, which is a division of the DHS, issued a statement August 11 on the new policy and reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to assist Cuban migrants and refugees who succeed in reaching U.S. shores. At the same time, however, the Bush administration is urging the Cuban people to remain on their native soil "so that they may work for their freedom and a democratic society," said DHS Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson.

Immigration processing in Cuba is regulated by the 1994 Joint Communique that allows the United States to process a minimum of 20,000 migrants for travel to the United States each year. Historically, three classes -- family-based immigrant visas, refugees and the Special Cuban Migration Program, referred to as the Cuban Lottery -- have made up that goal, but there has been a significant backlog of individuals that have applied for family-based immigrant visas. The Homeland Security plan aims to reduce this backlog by recognizing a fourth class of migrants -- Discretionary Family Reunification (Backlog) Parolees.

In support of its goal to reunify families split apart by the Castro regime, USCIS said it "will exercise its discretion to increase the numbers of Cuban migrants and refugees admitted to the United States each year who have family members in the United States."

Approximately 21,000 Cuban migrants are admitted into the United States annually. Even though that total number will not change, a significantly larger portion of the total will be Cubans with family members in the United States, according to the agency.

Since the recent transfer of power from an ailing Castro to his brother Raul, U.S. officials have been anticipating a potential influx of migrants from Cuba. Although "we discourage anyone from risking their life in the open seas in order to travel to the United States, ... if a Cuban chooses to reunite with their [U.S.-based] family, ... we support a safe, legal and orderly migration," said Jackson.

To help ensure that any migration from Cuba meets the "safe, legal and orderly" requirement, Homeland Security has pledged to work closely with Congress to develop legislation that will increase both criminal and civil penalties for maritime alien smugglers. Modeled on current maritime drug-smuggling laws, the proposed legislation will enhance prosecution of those who repeatedly endanger innocent lives.

The agency noted that some of Cuba's medical professionals also might qualify for immigrant status. "Using existing parole authority, the United States will allow Cuban medical personnel currently conscripted to study or work in a third country under the direction of the Cuban government to enter the United States," said USCIS. This policy will also apply to the families of these professionals, who often must remain in Cuba.

The full text (<http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?content=5799>) of a press release on the USCIS measures relating to Cuban migrants and refugees is available on the Department of Homeland Security Web site.

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*WPD114 08/14/2006

Inter-American Official Urges Cooperation Against Global Terror
(Dominican Republic ratifies U.S.-backed anti-terrorism pact) (380)

By Eric Green
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- An "urgent need" exists for countries in the Western Hemisphere to mount a united front against international terrorism, says José Miguel Insulza, the secretary-general of the Organization of American States (OAS).

In an August 10 statement, Insulza said that "if terrorism is international, then collaboration also must be international. We must all participate to combat this threat, and I believe that in the Americas we are all participating."

He stressed the need for the hemisphere to remain "one step ahead" in battling terrorism: "It is not enough to combat terrorism; we must stay ahead of its activities to be able to impede them."

Insulza spoke at OAS headquarters in Washington as the Dominican Republic became the latest country, on August 10, to ratify the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism, which provides for enhanced cooperation in the hemisphere in a number of areas, including exchanges of information, border control measures, and law enforcement action. The United States ratified the convention in November 2005.

Following the convention's ratification by the United States, John Maisto, U.S. permanent representative to the OAS, said that by working together, nations of the hemisphere "can defeat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever, and for whatever reason." Maisto said the convention is "central to the collaborative effort" by the OAS member states to defeating terrorism.

The OAS said 20 countries are party to the convention, which was adopted in June 2002 in Bridgetown, Barbados. Other states to recently ratify the measure were Ecuador on July 27, Grenada on May 26 and Guatemala on March 1.

The OAS's Insulza added that the OAS Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE) has been developing coordination measures among member states "to prevent dangerous actions and risks that are always latent in the region."

The U.S. State Department said in an April 10 fact sheet that CICTE is the "main multilateral vehicle for hemispheric cooperation in the fight against terrorism."

The fact sheet (<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2006/64283.htm>) is available on the State Department Web site, as is additional information (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/56929.htm>) about the U.S. ratification of the convention.

For more on U.S. policy, see The Americas (<http://usinfo.state.gov/wh>).

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*WPD115 08/14/2006

Mexico Seizes Methamphetamine Superlab, U.S. Agency Announces
(Anti-methamphetamine efforts by United States said to lead to discovery, seizure) (460)

By Eric Green
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Mexican authorities have seized a large-scale clandestine methamphetamine laboratory discovered August 1 near the Mexican city of Guadalajara, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) announced.

The DEA said August 10 approximately 100 kilograms of finished methamphetamine, 3,000 liters of various solvents and chemicals and four barrels of iodine were seized in the raid. A large hydraulic press used to finish the methamphetamine product and chemicals used to manufacture generic cough syrup also was seized. Four individuals were arrested at the lab by Mexican authorities and will be prosecuted in Mexico, said the DEA.

The agency said U.S. initiatives intended to boost Mexico's fight against methamphetamine helped lead Mexican authorities to the massive lab. Because of its size and production capability, the laboratory is classified as a "superlab," the DEA said.

The United States announced in May a comprehensive anti-methamphetamine initiative that included training for nearly 1,000 Mexican police officials on a variety of investigative enforcement and regulatory methods related to methamphetamine trafficking.

DEA Administrator Karen Tandy said the new U.S. "anti-meth initiative with Mexico is already making a difference in our fight to combat this deadly and highly addictive drug. Through extensive training and enhanced intelligence sharing, this bi-national law enforcement working agreement should keep meth traffickers looking over their shoulders every second of the day."

U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said May 18 that about 80 percent of all methamphetamine purchased in the United States originates from Mexican labs. But he added that the United States fully acknowledged "that without the strong American demand for these toxic substances, there would be no financial incentive for Mexican organizations to continue to produce" methamphetamine. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/Archive/2006/May/19-763654.html>).)

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) said in a June 19 statement that new data from employer drug tests showed that the United States is making "significant progress" in the effort to reduce methamphetamine use in this country. The data showed that the number of people testing positive in the United States for methamphetamine had hit a two year low. (The full text (<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/press06/061906.html>) of the ONDCP statement is available on the White House Web site.)

The ONDCP also announced in June it was launching a new communications campaign in the United States aimed at preventing use of methamphetamine in this country's Hispanic community. The English and Spanish-language campaign messages warn about the adverse effects of methamphetamine, which include hallucinations, mood disturbances, delusions, paranoia, and brain damage.

Additional information (<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/press06/060506.html>) about the campaign is available on the White House Web site.

For more on U.S. policy, see Mexico (<http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/americas/mexico.html>).

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*WPD116 08/14/2006

Youth Exchange Program Welcomes Young "Citizen Diplomats"

(Students from 24 countries participate in the State Department-sponsored program) (790)

By Cecilia Martin

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – More than 600 high school students from 24 countries filled Georgetown University's Gaston Hall August 10 for a welcome by State Department officials at an orientation session in Washington.

The students, selected for their potential as future leaders, are participants in the U.S. Department of State-sponsored Youth Exchange and Study (YES). The program's goal is to give young leaders interested in international diplomacy a taste of the real thing, beginning with an orientation session to acquaint them with the role of the Department of State in the YES program and the role of the students play as citizen diplomats of their countries.

The YES class of 2006-2007 is the fourth group of students to participate in the program, which was established in October 2002 to provide scholarships for students from countries with significant Muslim populations to study in a U.S. high school for up to one academic year.

Department of State Director of Strategic Communications Gordon Johndroe explained how the participants can teach Americans about their cultures and beliefs during their U.S. stays and teach people in their home countries what they learn about American culture when they return.

"I think for the most part you're going to find Americans to be very similar to you," said Johndroe, "and you'll be able to go to your home countries and talk to your friends and your family and your neighbors about that, and that's integral to the world moving forward together living in peace and freedom."

AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD BRIDGES

Department of State Program Specialist Robert Persiko addressed the students on their roles as citizen diplomats. Speaking of the conflicts that have disrupted life in many of the students' homelands, he said, "The name 'YES' is an affirmation that all things are possible. It is a positive response to the negativism in the world, and to all the people who have said that a program for young people from the Arab and Muslim world could not be done. Our answer to that is, 'yes it can'."

Students selected for the YES program are viewed as potential future leaders of their countries. Their time in the United States, spent living with an American family and studying at American high schools, is intended to give them a broader view of the world and help them develop their leadership qualities. They also learn about diplomacy.

"The YES program offers you the chance to ... play a direct role in building bridges of understanding for your country and the United States," Persiko said. He added that some might "be the only person from Iraq, Pakistan, or Indonesia that Americans ever meet. For them, you will be those countries."

Persiko encouraged the students to participate in dialogue with their classmates, host families, and other Americans they meet. Through cultural exchange, the YES students will be able to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions people in the United States might have about the Muslim world. At the same time, students will have the opportunity to compare stereotypical views of Americans with the Americans they meet and the society they experience. The goal, he said, is an appreciation of cultural diversity.

Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, addressed the gathering. "Indeed you are the leaders of the future, but unless you are able to work together and master the art of working together ... we can't become the leaders of the future," he told them.

"You have an opportunity ahead of you to become ambassadors of your religions, ambassadors of your countries, ambassadors of your background to this great country of ours," he said. "To do this ... you need to know how to communicate your ideas with respect to others ... and remember in talking you need to listen," explained Hendi.

The students' response to the orientation session was as enthusiastic as their anticipation of their upcoming experiences in the United States.

YES program student, Lijo John from India, explained that he came to the United States for exactly the reasons the speakers had mentioned. "I wanted to know more about the United States and understand it better, seeing the stereotypes and misunderstandings about Americans," John said. Already he is learning about other cultures through his fellow YES participants. "Because it's not possible for me to travel to all these other countries. It's a great opportunity for me to meet other people," he said.

The YES program students will stay with American host families in communities all across the United States.

Additional information (<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/students/nena/yes.htm>) is available on the program's Web site.

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*WPD117 08/14/2006

Transcript: State Department Spokesman's Daily Briefing
(Spokesman Sean McCormack briefs reporters August 14) (5210)

(begin transcript)

U.S. Department of State
Daily Press Briefing Index
Monday, August 14, 2006
12:00 p.m. EDT

Briefer: Sean McCormack, Spokesman

DEPARTMENT

- President's Briefings at the Department of State/Secretary Rice's Participation
- New Passports/Security Features

ISRAEL/LEBANON

- Resolution 1701/Large Scale Violence Ended/Laying the Foundation for Stable Strategic Situation
- Time Line for International Force/Assistant Secretary John Hillen's Assistance at the UN
- Israeli Hostages Should be Returned as Quickly as Possible
- Lebanese Government and People to Decide how Lebanese Army to Function/Resolution 1559 Requires Disarming of Hezbollah
- International Force to Coordinate with Lebanese Army/France's Expected Role
- Israel still has Right to Defend Itself
- UNIFIL's Enhanced Mandate/Different Organization
- Facts will Show Changed Strategic Environment in Middle East

ISRAEL/PALESTINIANS

- Situation in Lebanon and Palestinians' Election of Hamas

- U.S. Will Continue to Work with Those Who Want Peace to the Region/Return to Roadmap
- Israeli Government is a Partner for Peace/Hamas-led Government is Not a Peace Partner

IRAN/SYRIA

- Iran Continues to be a State Sponsor of Terror and Supporter of Hezbollah
- Resolutions 1701 and 1559 are a Strategic Setback for Iran and Syria
- Iran Could Face Sanctions Under Chapter 7 because of its Nuclear Program

CUBA

- Cuban People Still Living Under a Dictatorship/No Change in U.S. Policy

SRI LANKA

- U.S. Concerned About the Violence/Working to Get Back to Ceasefire

SOUTH CENTRAL ASIA

- Query on Topics of Discussion during Assistant Secretary Boucher's Recent Trip South Central Asia

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2006
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

12:00 p.m. EDT

MR. MCCORMACK: Good afternoon. How are you?

QUESTION: Good.

MR. MCCORMACK: Good. I don't have any opening statements. You all know the President will be over here just a little bit later this afternoon. He's going to have some briefings, going to cover the War on Terror, counter-proliferation, public diplomacy, transformational diplomacy, foreign assistance reform, and the Middle East. And then --

QUESTION: In how many minutes?

MR. MCCORMACK: Excuse me?

QUESTION: Over how many minutes?

MR. MCCORMACK: It's going to be over a couple of hours. He's going to have --

QUESTION: Could you say it slower one more time, the issues?

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure, yeah, three separate briefings. First one is War on Terror, counter-proliferation, and public diplomacy, those subjects grouped together. Transformational diplomacy and foreign assistance reform, grouped together, and then the Middle East, and then he will come out and talk to the pool and have some remarks.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Will the Secretary accompany him in the remarks?

MR. MCCORMACK: I think they'll work that out. She'll be there, obviously. I don't know what speaking role she'll have, if any.

QUESTION: On the pool?

MR. MCCORMACK: What's that?

QUESTION: On the pool?

MR. MCCORMACK: It's a White House event. It's going to be the White House pool. It's a pretty small space up there.

QUESTION: Is she going to be in all three of these?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yes, yeah, she'll be in all three of those.

QUESTION: But there will be a changing cast?

MR. MCCORMACK: That's right; there will be a rotating cast of characters actually doing the briefings, yeah.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, okay. Lead off, Barry.

QUESTION: Yeah, you want to -- have anything to say about how things are going so far in the ceasefire?

MR. MCCORMACK: I think you guys --

QUESTION: It's awful early, but go ahead.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right, yeah, you guys have all reported on that. Thus far, the large-scale violence has ended. Thus far, the parties seem to be largely complying with the terms of the resolution. And if we all do our work, as the Secretary has said, over time, this will lay the foundation for a durable, lasting cessation of violence and ceasefire and a much more stable strategic situation along that border area, along that northern Israeli border, Barry.

QUESTION: All right. Now if I read it right, I thought -- I think Hezbollah is saying that as long as Israel occupies Lebanese territory --

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: You know, they'll -- prepared to do what's necessary to end it. So there is an overlap, maybe a couple of weeks, maybe three weeks until the force is in place?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't have a timeline for you, Barry. We're pushing for this force to be generated as quickly as possible. I would expect that there would be a force-planning contributors conference up at the UN very, very soon and we, obviously, want to see that force generated as quickly as possible.

QUESTION: I don't know if you want to be the one to tick off some of the volunteers, but --

MR. MCCORMACK: No, I'll let them speak for themselves.

QUESTION: But along those lines, Sean, weren't -- those meetings were supposed to start already on Saturday, so there have been some discussions?

MR. MCCORMACK: There's already -- there's a rolling start to this. For example, John Hillen, our Assistant Secretary for Political and Military Affairs, has already been up to the UN a couple of times over

the past week to help them with their planning in terms of defining what size force you need, what functions will this force need to do, what sort of combat power will they need. So there has been some planning going on. There have, as I mentioned over the past week, been some countries that have expressed an interest now in going in there. And I think now that they have a look at the resolution, they'll have a better idea of whether or not they'll be able to follow through on that interest. And I would hope that very quickly, we would see countries coming forward and saying that they will participate in the force.

QUESTION: What would you consider a very quick timeframe? I mean, there are logistical issues even after the planning.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: So what do you --

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't -- I'm not going to set a specific timeline. It just needs to get done as quickly as possible.

QUESTION: So you see them in -- within how long?

MR. MCCORMACK: As quickly as possible.

Yeah.

QUESTION: In terms of the prisoners, I know the Italian Foreign Minister is in Beirut and met with Nabih Berri and apparently, Nabih Berri announced that he would no longer -- didn't want to be involved and he was going to be the mediator and not -- and he no longer wants to be involved. Is that not a very good start to the --

MR. MCCORMACK: We obviously want to see those prisoners, those Israeli hostages returned as quickly as possible, safe to their families. I think that that was the feeling expressed by the resolution as well.

QUESTION: What's your understanding of the process for that to take place?

MR. MCCORMACK: The process for that is not something the United States is involved in, but in only to the extent that we would want very much to see those prisoners, those hostages released at the earliest possible moment. And we would certainly expect that the Government of Lebanon would do everything it could to affect their release and return to Israel.

Joel.

QUESTION: Sean, following this ceasefire is there any regard to what happens to these Hezbollah guerillas? Is that to be integrated in with the Lebanese army?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't think -- you know, again, Joel, the -- how the Lebanese army functions is going to be a decision for the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese people. Hopefully, we won't have to live with such a term Hezbollah "guerilla" for much longer, because Resolution 1559 actually calls upon the Lebanese Government to disarm Hezbollah so that you don't have these militias -- we would say terrorist groups -- operating outside of the control of the central government.

QUESTION: Sean, following up on that --

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah, sure.

QUESTION: -- does that mean that the United States is prepared to accept Hezbollah as a political entity of they disarm --

MR. MCCORMACK: Again, that's not the situation we find ourselves. Hezbollah has to make a choice. They have to make the choice between whether or not they are going to be in a political camp or whether or not they are going to be a terrorist group. You can't have one foot in each camp. And how the Lebanese people decide to organize themselves politically is up to them. But you can't have the current situation. It is a contradiction that needs to be resolved. The way it gets resolved is by the Lebanese people. And you posed the question -- you would face a fundamentally different situation whereby you have a group of people who are not committed to terrorism. That is not in fact the case. It is the case now that you have a group that is committed to the use of terror, and they have to make a choice and the Lebanese people have to make that same choice.

QUESTION: But surely you don't want to see the same thing happen as happened in the Palestinian territories where they -- the people did choose the group --

MR. MCCORMACK: Again, we've gone over this territory before. They didn't run -- Hamas did not run on the platform of we're going to send your 16-year-old kids to blow up Israeli citizens. They run on the platform of we're going to clean up your government.

Now, again, we've gone over this before. It is unusual that there -- just as there was the beginnings of some potentially positive ferment within the Palestinian political system, you had the most radical, violent elements of Hamas staged that attack on the Israeli guard post and capturing an Israeli soldier. They knew the effect that that would have on the political process within Palestinian areas. So we certainly want to get back to the point where you can even have the hope of getting back on the roadmap, some sort of positive political process. And the way you do that is you have these groups recognize the right of Israel to exist, abide by the international obligations that have been outlined for them. That's certainly what we hope to -- we would hope to get back to that point.

Secretary Rice, when she went to the region, sent that message to President Abbas. And we certainly stand with President Abbas. We believe that he is a -- somebody who is interested in peace and has a positive vision for the Palestinian people.

QUESTION: Sean, one final one. What is your understanding of how soon the Lebanese army would go down? We don't know about the international force yet, but the Lebanese army conceivably will be moving in concert with those troops or --

MR. MCCORMACK: I think that those movements have to be coordinated and that it's envisioned that the international force would be supporting the Lebanese army. And I think we all understand that the Lebanese army at this point is not a force that can really exert that kind of positive control over southern Lebanon. So I would expect that those movements would be coordinated. That's going to be part of the function of this international force working with the Lebanese Government to coordinate those movements. You also have to figure in the Israeli military to this equation as well, so there's a lot of complicated, complex coordination that needs to be done. We're going to do everything that we can to help facilitate that and I would expect the UN would be deeply involved as well.

QUESTION: I have one more. Is there any clarification that France is going to take the lead in the force?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't know that they've said that in public. I think that they're -- I think the expectation is that they would play a significant role in the force.

QUESTION: To follow up on that part of your answer --

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah, sure.

QUESTION: Did I understand correctly you don't assume the Lebanese army move to southern Lebanon until the international force moves there?

MR. MCCORMACK: I said only, Charlie, that those movements would have to be coordinated with the international force. I would expect that those movements would be done in concert, Charlie. I don't have a timeline for either of those right now, but those things would have to be done together. I think the understanding, when the resolution was passed, is that the international force would be going down in support of the Lebanese army because it didn't have the wherewithal, at this point, to fulfill the mandate of the resolution.

QUESTION: But in the meantime, and you're hoping for -- you know, a force getting down there as soon as possible, but in the meantime, Israel keeps troops in Lebanon?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: And Israel -- you know, is prepared to shoot if provoked. Does the Administration have any problem with the -- because it could be the thing that stimulates or sets off a Hezbollah attack. Does the U.S. have any problem with Israeli troops hanging in there for another couple of weeks until the force takes over?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, the -- well, two things. One, we want the force generated as quickly as possible and -- because that triggers a number of things. It triggers a deploying of the international force and in parallel with that deployment, the withdrawal of Israeli forces. And that's an important point, that they get done in parallel. So there's a rough equivalence there in terms of international forces, Lebanese forces coming into an area and what Israeli forces are leaving an area. So that's the first thing.

Second of all, Barry, you want to -- the terms of the resolution are very clear. It talks about what is incumbent upon the Government of Lebanon and Hezbollah to do. Hezbollah needs to cease all activities, all military kinds of activities, whether that's launching rockets or launching attacks. The resolution calls on Israel to stop all offensive military operations. There's nothing in this resolution that calls upon Israel to abrogate its rights to self-defense.

QUESTION: Okay. That answers it.

MR. MCCORMACK: Lambros.

QUESTION: It was -- New York Times reported today on the front page, "When Israel began Counterattack on Hezbollah one month ago, the U.S. Administration backed Israel's plan to destroy the militia."

MR. MCCORMACK: Where is this, Lambros?

QUESTION: In New York Times, front page, and "to destroy the militia (inaudible) targets resisting efforts by France, and now they're alleged call for a ceasefire immediately." Could you please comment on that?

MR. MCCORMACK: On what part of it, what part of it?

QUESTION: The question is if it's true that you're trying -- you are resisting efforts by France and other allies to call a ceasefire.

MR. MCCORMACK: We have plowed this ground so many times, I think we're clear from the very beginnings of it. President Bush, Secretary Rice, when they were in Germany, as well as in Russia, made very clear that we wanted an end to the violence as quickly as possible, but we wanted an end to the violence that would be durable. You had to have an end to the violence that would be -- that would last beyond -- you know, two days, three weeks, six years. And that's what this resolution -- what we have the potential for.

Joel, do you have one on this topic or is it a different topic?

QUESTION: No, it's referring back to the earlier topic. Do you think Iran is still running this particular show and they have till August 31st? Of course, you bring them as well as --

MR. MCCORMACK: That's a different topic, Joel.

QUESTION: Well -- but are they still running the show? Because currently, Iran and Hezbollah are now using media tactics. You had Mike Wallace with President Ahmadi-Nejad yesterday and also, apparently he's making nice, saying he now has a personal blog, that's Ahmadi-Nejad.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right. Look, you know, I don't even know where to begin with all of that. But certainly, Iran continues to be a state sponsor of terror. Iran is very clearly a sponsor of Hezbollah, give them political diplomatic as well as material support. But I think it's fair to say as -- if this resolution and when this resolution is fully implemented, this is a strategic setback for Iran. This is a strategic setback for Syria, because you will have a strengthened, democratic Lebanon. You will have a more stable area along that border. You will not have Hezbollah roaming freely in the south of Lebanon. Iran and Syria will not have had the ability to re-arm Hezbollah. So I think that very clearly that when this resolution is fully implemented and when you have 1559 implemented, even further, that would represent a setback to Iran.

Kirit.

QUESTION: One on Iran.

QUESTION: Eh--

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure.

QUESTION: I was going to ask -- a few days ago, maybe it was you. It probably was you. Saw no rainbow, no prospect of Iran complying with either its own August 21st deadline, and the UN August -- end of August deadline for stopping its uranium enrichment. Has anything changed? Is there a glimmer of --

MR. MCCORMACK: Not going to try to assess, Barry. That would require getting into the decision-making processes of the Iranian regime into which I don't have great -- we don't have great insight. We would hope that they take up the opportunity that's been given to them. Thus far, they -- we have received no official word through Mr. Solana that they have decided to take up the world on that offer. And what happens next is that they face sanctions under a Chapter 7 resolution.

QUESTION: That has to be planned, doesn't it?

MR. MCCORMACK: Excuse me?

QUESTION: If there are sanctions, you have to have planning --

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, there are --

QUESTION: -- meetings.

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, there are steps that individual states can take. There are states that we can take collectively under the rubric of the UN Security Council resolution and that, of course, would entail discussions, you know, up in New York and in capitals on what a next resolution would entail and exactly what sanctions would be enacted under that resolution.

QUESTION: Last thing.

MR. MCCORMACK: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: If I can go back to Lebanon?

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure.

QUESTION: The usual question -- has the Secretary been in touch with anybody of late?

MR. MCCORMACK: No phone calls today, Barry.

QUESTION: Okay, thanks.

MR. MCCORMACK: Elise.

QUESTION: Also on Iran and the resolution. Given the fact that you're -- on the whole Hezbollah issue and talking about an arms embargo because Iran's one of the main suppliers of Hezbollah, is there any effort to expand the action against Iran or at the UN Security Council to include some of the activities of arming Hezbollah, anything like that? Like not just dealing solely with the nuclear issue but other concerns that you have on Iran?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, 1701 talks about -- calls upon all the states not to -- not try to export arms into Lebanon without the explicit permission of the Lebanese Government and it calls upon the Lebanese Government not to permit such arms in. So clearly that puts a crimp in the Iran-Hezbollah operating style if it is fully implemented.

Kirit.

QUESTION: If I could ask something about the Lebanon resolution?

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure.

QUESTION: Can you help define for us what exactly would be a non-offensive action by Israel? What would be a defensive action?

MR. MCCORMACK: I'm not going to try get into the military definitions. I think that in its most simple form it calls upon Israel not to continue on with ground offensives, not continue actively trying to go after and take more Lebanese territory from -- in the kinds of operations that they were engaged in. In terms of a defensive action, I think that there were some reports of some skirmishes. The Israel Government said that their soldiers were threatened by armed Hezbollah militants. They took actions. I haven't heard any dispute with that characterization at this point.

QUESTION: With regard to aerial attacks and so on, how would that fit into offensive verses defensive?

MR. MCCORMACK: Again, you know, what this resolution calls upon is for an end to large-scale violence of the kind that we had seen before. But again, like I said, it doesn't abrogate Israel's right to defend itself.

Dave.

QUESTION: You got into a little winners and losers there with Joel's question. There's a widespread impression in the Middle East that the conflict has elevated Nasrallah's status, practically a hero across the Arab world. There's also some suggestion, certainly by many analysts, that because of Hezbollah's showing on the field that the United States had to settle for less than it wanted with the resolution.

MR. MCCORMACK: How so less than we wanted?

QUESTION: Well, less of an international force, just an augmentation of UNIFIL, for instance, which is sort of --

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, what we have is the version of UNIFIL with an "S" on its chest as opposed to the Clark Kent/1 version of UNIFIL. No, in fairness, that -- the previous UNIFIL had a weak mandate, relatively weak mandate. This is an enhanced UNIFIL. This is just a different -- it's just -- it may have the same name, but it is -- you know, it is a completely different organization in terms of its size, its abilities, and its mandate.

In terms of Nasrallah, I haven't seen him pop his head out from whatever cave or basement he happens to be hiding in. And in terms of -- you know, the feelings throughout the Middle East, look, it's an emotional time. But I expect that at the end of the day, that the people of the region will look at a Lebanon -- once this resolution is implemented, they will see a Lebanon that is -- that has enhanced democratic institutions, that has a strong prime minister in Prime Minister Siniora, that is committed to implementing these resolutions, that is committed to a more peaceful, stable, democratic Lebanon that will see Hezbollah out of business in the south of Lebanon. And they will also see an international community coming together to stop -- to call for the end of re-supplying of Hezbollah.

And just look at the statements. Look at Secretary General Annan's statement right before the vote this past Friday, in which he singled out Hezbollah as the group responsible for starting this current crisis. So once, I think, the emotions settle from what has been -- you know, very clearly, an emotional time in the Middle East, I think that people will start to look at the facts, and I think that the facts will show that this is -- that this will be a changed, strategic environment in that small part of the world.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Talking about change of the strategic environment in that part of the world, do you seem to miss -- after you're mentioning that this has been -- this war in south Lebanon has been representing a setback for some countries, but what about it being a fact that has changed the equation that Israel cannot depend on its military might in the area to -- for launching more wars and conquering -- and other countries? And do you -- does the United States have any more positive attitude toward the Arab call for new efforts for -- to bring peace to the Middle East and for the United States to convince Israel to come back to the peace negotiations?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, I will leave it to other states in the region to make their own assessments about Israel's military capabilities and factor that into their decision-making. And as for what level of degradation Israel -- the Israeli military inflicted upon Hezbollah and its fortifications in the south, again, I'll leave it to the Israeli military to describe what it is that they think that they have accomplished. It's not for me to say. I'm not a military man. I'm not here to provide military analysis.

As for peace in the Middle East, of course; I don't think that there has been an Administration that has been more dedicated to trying to resolve differences between the Israeli Government and the Palestinians and to try to -- and for the first time, Barry, since the establishment of the State of Israel, you actually have Palestinians now with their own territory, after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Our hope had been that that might have led the parties to be able to move further down the roadmap. That didn't happen. Hamas won an election.

And you said that -- well, what will the U.S. do -- and this is paraphrasing -- do to get Israel back to the peace table? Well, there is a partner for peace in Israel. It's the Israeli Government. Unfortunately, on the other side of the table, there isn't a partner for peace in the form of the Palestinian Government led by Hamas. They haven't met the most basic requirements agreed upon across the international community, and I think if you talk to Arab leaders, I think that they would say the same thing, that this government has not met the most basic requirements to start discussing peace negotiations to even get back into the roadmap. So we would very much hope for the day when we could get into a serious discussion of the roadmap, how to move forward to a final settlement. And before that time, we're going to do everything that we can to work with those people who do want to bring peace to the region; work with the Israeli Government, work with President Abbas.

QUESTION: It is sad when the Arab countries and Arab people are seeing now, that the Middle East peace process is being shrunk to only Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Arab summit of Beirut a few years ago and now the Arab delegation at the United Nations have been calling for a comprehensive peace to settle the whole conflict of the Middle East between Israel and all the Arab -- other Arab countries. We're not talking here about only the Palestinians and the Israelis, so is there a movement or is there a thought -- kind of thinking, a school in this Administration that is going to take this goal more seriously?

MR. MCCORMACK: I guess I would differ with the interpretation that we haven't taken it seriously; of course we have. Just look at the fact that there are Arab governments that have taken the steps themselves to make peace with Israel. You look at Egypt; you look at Jordan. There are states, and it is certainly up to individual -- Israel's individual neighbors to take the steps that they feel necessary and feel that they can to make peace with Israel. That is their choice. They can. Right now today, they could. They could take those steps. But very often, you hear that -- hear from them that they -- you need to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before they would feel comfortable doing that. That's why I focused on that aspect of it. But there's nothing -- there wouldn't be anything stopping another -- any of Israel's neighbor from establishing diplomatic relations with them.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Do you have any comment on the reports that Hassan Nasrallah has been hiding out in the Iranian embassy in Beirut for the last --

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't know where he's been hiding.

Yes.

QUESTION: What's your take on the pictures that have emerged from Fidel Castro and his brother?

MR. MCCORMACK: I've seen them. That's all I would say about it, yeah.

QUESTION: And the situation in Cuba, how is it now, the situation in Cuba, do you know?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, the Cuban people still won't live under a dictatorship.

QUESTION: Is there any change in American policy because of what -- or any --

MR. MCCORMACK: No.

Yeah.

QUESTION: I want to go back to Iran, terrorism, and on Sri Lanka. On terrorism, as far as this plot which was discovered by the British -- against U.S. and British interest or airlines, this is not the norm. I understand that I was told that -- by the writers and commentators and all that, this had been going on for some time and British knew about it for the last whole year. My question is that if they had ever briefed the U.S., if U.S. knew that something like this is going -- under investigation and another -- and second, during Ambassador Richard Boucher's visit to (inaudible) and to Bangladesh and Pakistan -- I mean Bangladesh and India, if he -- if this issue came ever during his visit or talks between any of the leaders in the area?

MR. MCCORMACK: On the second, we'll try to get you an answer, Goyal. I don't know. I haven't talked to Richard.

On the first, there have been people that have addressed that question in public, including Fran Townsend who's the President's Homeland Security adviser. So I would leave it to those more directly involved to answer those questions.

QUESTION: Just to follow one more. A lot of press reports and all the major newspapers are blaming or talking, or naming Pakistan's hand. Where do you see any --

MR. MCCORMACK: Again, Goyal, I'll leave it to others that have been more directly involved in this plot, and foiling this plot to talk about those things.

QUESTION: Finally, on Sri Lanka, fighting terror and killing still going on again. Do we see any end to -- any resolution, UN resolution or any kind of, again, ceasefire?

MR. MCCORMACK: We, Goyal, we would very much hope that the parties could get back to a ceasefire. We have been working towards that end. We are very much concerned by the situation there and we would hope we could get back to the point of a ceasefire, then from there move on to something, a more lasting settlement.

Kirit.

QUESTION: Today, the new passports are being rolled out with the electronic chip inside them. Are you guys confident that all security concerns have been addressed?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, in terms of -- we'll try to get you more information on the passports. I know that there's been a lot of discussion about -- one aspect of the security features of these passports. But I have to tell you, there were a number of overlapping, redundant security features to the passports, so that is just one aspect of it. And I am told the information contained on that chip is no more extensive than you would find on the inside flap written down on that passport.

QUESTION: So you're not concerned about the ability to alter that information, using outside devices or -
-

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, again, we will get you another -- get you more briefings on this, and people can go in as much depth as they possibly can in describing the security features of it, but there are overlapping security features to these passports. So it's not just -- it doesn't rest -- there's no single point failure here on these passports.

Okay, thanks.

(The briefing was concluded at 12:30 p.m.)

1/Clark Kent: Comic book character; Superman disguised himself as a human without super powers, named Clark Kent.

(end transcript)

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*WPD118 08/14/2006

Transcript: Press Briefing by Tony Snow

(President's schedule, Lebanon/Israeli cease-fire, avian influenza, Pakistan/United Kingdom, Cuba, homeland security/threat level, Iran) (5800)

(begin transcript)

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
August 14, 2006

PRESS BRIEFING BY TONY SNOW

White House Conference Center Briefing Room

10:16 A.M. EDT

MR. SNOW: Let me run you through a bit of what's going on with the President's day. Then we will get to questions. First, let me -- I'll run through the President's day.

He is meeting right now with the Secretary of Defense and the defense policy and programs team at the Pentagon, will have lunch with experts on Iraq. Those experts are Vali Nasr, professor of Middle East Politics at the Naval Post-Graduate School; Eric Davis, professor of Political Science at Rutgers University; Carole O'Leary, scholar-in-residence for the Middle East Initiative at American University; and Reuel Marc Gerecht, who is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

After lunch, he will travel to the State Department, meeting with the Secretary of State and the foreign policy team; will deliver a statement on foreign policy from the State Department at approximately 3:30 p.m. And at 4:25 p.m., there will be the signing of HR 5683, to preserve the Mount Soledad Veterans Memorial in San Diego, California.

An update on the situation in Lebanon: Since the cease-fire this morning, there have been no rocket attacks, no defensive movements. There have been two minor military skirmishes between Israeli and Hezbollah forces.

Let me see what else we have here. In addition, there was a foreign leader call this morning at the behest -- it was initiated by Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, about the situation in Lebanon. The two of them welcomed the passage of the U.N. Security Council resolution -- that's 1701 -- and discussed how to ensure that the enhanced UNIFIL authorized by the resolution will succeed in its mission. The President thanked the Prime Minister for Italy's willingness to contribute troops to the international force, and the President stressed that Iran and Syria must halt their supply of weapons to Hezbollah and respect the sovereignty of Lebanon.

In addition, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior, at the top of the hour, will be announcing that routine surveillance has indicated the possible presence of an H5N1 avian influenza virus in wild mute swans in Michigan. However, this is not what we're accustomed to hearing about from Asia. At this point, they believe it is a strain of low pathogenicity, similar to strains that have been seen before in North America. It does not appear to be related to the highly pathogenic strain that has spread through birds in Asia, Europe, and Africa. For further information, I would direct you to the briefing by Interior and Agriculture Department officials who will be talking about that in just a few minutes.

I'm ready for questions. Terry.

QUESTION: As you look at this, the month-long war in the Mideast, who won?

MR. SNOW: I'm not sure -- right now what's won is diplomacy has won. There has been an attempt to make effective U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, which called for the abolition of militias in the southern part of Lebanon, and also -- by the way, that would include Hezbollah or any other militias -- and also the cessation of attempts to arm such militias from abroad. That is now the focus of efforts by the United States, the United Nations, the international community.

At this point, we are hoping that the people of Lebanon will be the ultimate victors because they'll be able to have a government in which the democratic will of the people is expressed through the policies of that

government, and they don't have to be worrying about Hezbollah having its own independent foreign policy or the ability to try to wage war and engage neighboring states.

Q: Do you think that Hezbollah has been weakened? What is its strength --

MR. SNOW: I'm not going to give you a military assessment. I mean, it's pretty obvious that there's been some weakening; I'm not going to try to assess it. But by Israeli reckoning, more than 500 Hezbollah guerillas killed, certainly rocket capacity has degraded, and so on. But, again, it would be presumptuous of me to try to give you an on-the-ground military assessment. I will let the interested parties talk about that.

Brett.

Q: Tony, the President has spoken many times about the support from Syria and Iran for Hezbollah. Is he confident now, under the terms of the cease-fire, that that support will somehow be interrupted?

MR. SNOW: Well, we're going to find out, aren't we? That really does have to be one of the things that -- one of the outcomes of this. I think, in part, it will require placing on the northern border of Lebanon somebody who is capable of handling security in such a way as to intercept, interrupt and, with any luck, stop the transport into Lebanon of arms from Iran and Syria.

It's folly to make predictions, but that is certainly the intention. It's one of the reasons why we're talking about the beefed up UNIFIL force. It's one of the reasons why the President was talking today with Prime Minister Prodi about ways to work forward -- to move forward, and it's why there have been ongoing discussions with some of our allies to build a much more robust force than UNIFIL has had in the past, or, for that matter, more robust than the capabilities, at least at present, of the Lebanese armed forces.

Q: But northern border protection is not part of this cease-fire.

MR. SNOW: Well, it's -- one of the things in it is making effective the provisions of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, which does, in fact, specify that armaments should not be coming in from foreign governments.

Now, you're right. I don't want to be trying to prejudge what people are going to be doing, but it does seem that there's going to be some need to be able to prevent the influx of weapons into the country.

Martha.

Q: Tony, you mentioned there were no defensive actions today after the cease-fire. What do you define as "defensive actions"? If Israel continues to go into areas after being attacked, is that a defensive action?

MR. SNOW: It appears at this point -- let me just put it this way -- nobody seems to have initiated any kind of movements, and I'll leave it at that for now.

Q: Could you define what you mean by "defensive action", why you chose to use that language?

MR. SNOW: Because that was the language that was recited to me. (Laughter.)

Q: Well, what does it mean?

MR. SNOW: That's a very good question. Why don't we -- I'll tell you what. We'll try to be more specific in terms of -- let me be very precise. There have been no troop movements, apparently, on either side designed to change the military status quo that prevailed at 5:00 a.m. GMT, which is when the cease-fire took hold. And rather than getting myself into the sticky wicket of trying to define "defensive," because I

have a feeling it's going to be one of those you-know-it-when-you-see-it deals, I can tell you that there have been two minor skirmishes and that is it today.

Helen.

Q: I have two questions. Did the President call for the respect of sovereignty by both sides?

MR. SNOW: Respect of sovereignty?

Q: You just mentioned Hezbollah.

MR SNOW: I think what happens here is that -- yes, the President has called for everybody to respect the sovereignty of the government of Lebanon. And one of the things that he's pointed out in the past is that when you've had a power vacuum in the South, which has been the case in the past, it has invited Hezbollah to go in and serve as a government within a government or state within a state. The Israelis have agreed to pull out as international forces move in, providing credible security for the people in southern Lebanon, and also, at the same time, providing some assurance that Hezbollah will not try to rearm again.

Q: My second question: Why does the President want to modify the Geneva accords, conventions, to prevent inhumane, cruel treatment of detainees?

MR. SNOW: The President has never suggested modifying the Geneva conventions.

Q: You mean that all these stories are wrong?

MR. SNOW: Well, the Geneva conventions, as has been construed -- there are two things you've got to keep in mind. Number one, the Geneva conventions always must be construed especially -- you're talking about Common Article Three?

Q: Yes.

MR. SNOW: -- in manners that are consistent with the U.S. law. The second thing is this is a new situation because the Geneva conventions in the past have not been construed as applying to those who do not fight for duly constituted military forces. We will wait to see when we have a final decision on how to implement the Hamdan case. I think, at this point, what you're reacting to is things that you've seen, and I'll be happy to entertain more specific questions when we have a proffer.

Q: Are these all speculative and not true?

MR. SNOW: No, it's all trying to figure out the proper way also. One of the difficulties in Common Article Three is that there's a great deal of vague language and rather than, "trying to change the Geneva accords," what we're trying to do is to interpret them.

Q: Does the President have any concern about how Prime Minister Olmert's political standing has been affected by all of this? A lot of criticism within his own country and around the world.

MR. SNOW: No, but I think the President does understand what happens when you're in a period of war, which is that you're always going to take some political heat if you're trying to do what you think is right. And he certainly understands and appreciates the fact that there are going to be responses from people in any nation that is affected by war, and he certainly has a keen understanding and appreciation.

Q: Prime Minister Olmert today said that Israel will continue to pursue Hezbollah leaders, "everywhere and any time." I mean, do you view that as in line with the cease-fire?

MR. SNOW: Well, I think what we ought to do is just to see what people do on the ground and we'll react to things going on on the ground.

Q: Tony, could you characterize for us the President's, the administration's impressions of this cessation of hostilities so far? And also, is it still the case that no U.S. troops will be involved in this beefed up UNIFIL force?

MR. SNOW: As the President has said, at some point U.S. forces may be involved in kind of support or logistics, but --

Q: But not UNIFIL --

MR. SNOW: No. It's probably a little premature to be taking a look at a cease-fire that's been in effect for nine-and-a-half hours, but I think the one thing we can say is that this is one of the things that the President and the Secretary of State have been pushing forward from July 12th on, which is to try to create conditions diplomatically that are going to provide some credible way of giving effect to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559.

So that is why there's been a lot of conversation -- and as you saw, there was that diplomatic taffy pull as we tried to figure out how to get to the resolution that all sides would support, in which you would have a resolution that had clearly stated goals; that would define what we were talking about in terms of security and sovereignty for the government of Lebanon in the southern part of Lebanon; that would have an international commitment so that the armed forces, the Lebanese armed forces also would have the kind of support they need to effectively control the southern part of the country; and would not only restate the provisions of 1559, but also look forward on some of the other questions that have been raised. And there is language within the resolution to deal with some of the outstanding negotiation issues including that of prisoners.

Q: So, no adjectives -- hopeful, optimistic?

MR. SNOW: It's been nine-and-a-half hours. I mean, it's what -- the one thing you want to do is, obviously, we want not only for the cease-fire to hold, but to set in train the kind of events that are going to get us to where we want to be, which is a freestanding, democratic government in Lebanon that no longer has to worry about provocations that are waged within its borders by a militia that does not represent the people of Lebanon.

Q: How soon do you expect the international force to start deploying in there, and who should be in it? I mean, you've talked about the United States' role -- who else? Who should be in it?

MR. SNOW: I'll let you ask the parties involved. That is a matter of ongoing discussion. I think the French and Italians have been on record as having some interest, but I would be loathe to try to tell you exactly who's going to be in it. My understanding is that a lot of these things ought to be worked out within the next couple of weeks. Deployment schedules we'll get to you as soon as we know about it.

Q: And you're confident that what's on the ground now is going to hold while the international community sort of slowly ramps up into this --

MR. SNOW: I think -- no. Look, it's going to require good behavior on the part of Hezbollah, and we're going to have to see. We've had statements coming out that would indicate that people say that they're not going to abide by it, but so far they have. No rockets fired by Hezbollah today. And we hope that everybody will stay true to this cease-fire, and that the government of Lebanon, again, will be able to have the credibility.

But a piece of paper outlines the way forward, but a lot of times that still has to be conducted by people on the ground, the people also within Lebanon. The Lebanese government has a role to play; the

governments of Syria and Iran have a role to play; Hezbollah has a role to play; the Israelis have a role to play. And we'll have to see how all those things work out in the hours, days, and weeks ahead.

Jim.

Q: Tony, what does the President want to get out of today's meeting with these experts? And, if I may, I guess he's had several of these now -- have these meetings affected policy at least in terms of tactics? And how open today is he to hearing about ideas about changing tactics?

MR. SNOW: Well, number one, these meetings happen all the time and the meetings that we're going through today are meetings with the national security team. Tomorrow we'll have the Homeland Security and Counter-terror team. We'll have the economic advisors at the end of the week. He does that every summer.

Today's topics at the Department of Defense have to deal -- first, the conversation deals with transformation within the Department of Defense, which, as you know, has been a priority of the Secretary from the very beginning, and also some discussion of the Far East. The Iraq experts are being brought in today to help provide differing views and overviews of the situation, in particular taking a look at the roles, the politics, the outlooks, the culture of Sunni, Shia and Kurd forces within Iraq, but also to take a broader look at the region, see how everything pieces together.

I think it's safe to say what the President does in sessions like this is invite people to express very openly their candid views on things. And you're going to find people who have disagreements within this group of four about the situation, about who could play what role. But, having said that, they play a role in the sense that they add to the President's knowledge and understanding of the region; they introduce new ideas and they allow him to question closely people who spend the vast majority of their time studying issues that are of keen concern to him, and at this point, of the country.

Q: Even dissenters?

MR. SNOW: Yes, absolutely. And, Helen, that's an important point. We do not in "Amen" choruses. What you do is you invite smart people in who have different points of view. At Camp David, we heard widely differing recommendations on how to proceed militarily within Iraq. And that is a very useful service. You don't want people who are simply saying exactly the same thing. You want to be able to take an issue, look at it from different angles, try to understand the arguments and the information that motivates those arguments. It gives the President just a much broader spectrum by which to view what's going on.

Q: But does that affect the policy? And there's been a lot of -- there continues to be criticism of the efficacy of the plan to quell the violence, so is this part of a process of honing the tactics, changing the tactics?

MR. SNOW: Well, the tactical responsibilities still lie, for instance on military operations, with the generals on the ground. The President uses this to shape his thinking about issues. It's not as if somebody says, "you know, I heard something really good at lunch, let's change tactics." It doesn't quite operate in that way. But what does happen is that the President finds himself -- he wants to look at creative ways of looking at the situation, and I think it's useful, not merely for the President, but for everybody involved.

Since I'm here, I won't -- I'm not likely to be at the lunch, I may get there in time, but if not, I'm getting full readouts on the note-taking. Furthermore, read books of all the things that the people have put together. I think it's important for all of us to try to learn as much as possible, and this is part of the ongoing dialogue that the President has been inviting for quite some time.

Q: Tony, while there's been a lot of welcoming by Democrats of the cease-fire, there's also been a lot of criticism of getting there. What's your response to some of the Democrats' criticism?

MR. SNOW: I need to have a specific criticism. I don't want to just be --

Q: That the President didn't press hard enough from the beginning.

MR. SNOW: Well, it's a peculiar criticism, since the President was the first to talk about it within hours of the seizure of Israeli hostages on the 12th of July. And furthermore, at that juncture -- and I would invite you to go back and look at the press avail he did that day with Chancellor Merkel -- laid out the principles that ended up not only being the guiding principles, but the core principles of the United Nations resolution. Furthermore, the United States took a lead role in the diplomacy from the very beginning, and ended up working with the French and others to try to come to a resolution. And, in addition, on a welcome note, Secretary General Annan also, in the final hours, was playing a very constructive role, as well, making sure that the process moved forward in a way that achieved the goals that the President outlined at the very beginning.

So, I'm sorry, but it may be a handy criticism to say that the President is not engaged, but it simply doesn't fit the facts in this case.

Peter.

Q: Is there any disappointment in the administration that Israel didn't do a better job of knocking out Hezbollah?

MR. SNOW: No. There's been a lot of speculation that the United States has been engaged in military coordination, cooperation with Israel, and it's not the case. And furthermore, the notion that we're sort of sitting back, saying, "get them, get them, get them; we're buying you time," that's not the way it worked. If you take a look at the diplomacy last week, we were pushing very hard to try to get a resolution wrapped up as quickly as possible. So the answer is, no.

Q: Can you talk about the economic advisors event on Friday? And how is that going to be different from what he's done in past summers?

MR. SNOW: You know, I'll give you a fuller readout as it approaches, but it's going to be the same sort of thing he typically does, which is to take a look forward, how do we build on the strength and growth in the economy. But rather than give you a boiler plate answer, which is what I'm doing at this moment, I'll try to get you something that's a little more specific and useful.

Goyal, go ahead.

Q: Two questions, yeah, one on Lebanon. Tony, what was accomplished? The terrorists are still there. Those soldiers who are still there. So many people died, and their supporters and their financials are still there. Nobody has been punished as far as this war is concerned. What was accomplished?

MR. SNOW: Well, number one, you've leaped to a whole lot of conclusions that I'm not sure are fully grounded in fact, Goyal. It will take some time to assess what was done. I guarantee you that some of the terrorists were punished. Furthermore, what you now have is a global emphasis on the roles of Iran and Syria in terms of helping foment violence within Lebanon, and also trying to foil the democratic aspirations of people in Lebanon, and also the Palestinian Authority, for that matter. That's an important advancement because it does make clear who's responsible not only on the ground, but regionally, for supporting the kind of violence that we have seen.

In addition, what you also have -- Secretary Annan pointed this out last week -- there have been no prior commitment to UNIFIL troops to say, okay, you need to make sure that the militias are not operating in the south. That's now crystal clear. That is absolutely part of the mandate of forces that are going to be there in the South.

You also have a commitment on the part of -- on all parties to make sure that the government of Lebanon has the ability to stand up and govern the entirety of its country and exercise sovereignty effectively. So I think what you've had is one of those clarifying moments where people really do realize all the factors that are in play, and now are working together to try to figure out a proper way and a diplomatic way and as peaceful a way as possible to move forward so we can get to democracy without further bloodshed and violence.

Q: I have another one on --

MR. SNOW: If it's on India and Pakistan, I can't help you. But if you've got something -- what you need to do, if you've got an India-Pakistan --

Q: -- terrorism and Britain --

MR. SNOW: Okay, that's fine. Go ahead.

Q: I have been saying this for the last 10 years, and now I think all the front-page headlines in The New York Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, and U.S. and British officials are also saying -- my question is, does still the President trust and still consider allies General Musharraf and Pakistan?

MR. SNOW: Well, the Pakistanis, as the British have pointed out, played a very important role in breaking this cell. And President Musharraf has certainly taken considerable risks in moving against terror, and we welcome all advancements in breaking into the terror network.

Q: Cuba, the statement over the weekend, the photographic evidence that Fidel Castro is alive, if not totally well -- but he told his people, be prepared for adverse news. Would adverse news for Cuba be good news for the White House?

MR. SNOW: We'll have to find out. I mean, heaven knows. At least they came up -- first you had the cheesy photo shop picture; at least the second one was a little better.

Q: Can you give us a sense of where the U.S. government right now thinks the threat level is for an attack on the United States, off of this plot? The terror threat came down one notch today, but the ringleader is still out there, other guys are still out there they haven't caught yet. What is the message here?

MR. SNOW: With all due respect, we never answer questions like that. We're just never going to provide operational information about the whereabouts, the tactics. But what I can repeat is the fact that we went from red back to orange, as have the Brits. So there has been some degradation at least of this particular threat.

Q: So what does that mean? We're getting back to the whole question of what do the color codes mean. How are people supposed to react to that, getting on planes --

MR. SNOW: Well, as I said last week when it was red, it's safe to fly on airplanes. And I think hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people experienced that over the weekend. So it's still safe to fly on airplanes, but it's also important to be vigilant and look out for things that may be -- may seem to be a little bit fishy, and do what you can to play your role.

Q: Does the President support the Republican candidate for Senate in Connecticut?

MR. SNOW: The President supports the democratic process in the state of Connecticut, and wishes them a successful election in November.

Q: Wait a minute. I realize he supports democracy, but I'm wondering, does he actually support his own party's candidate?

MR. SNOW: I know that's not news --

Q: Why aren't you committing -- why wouldn't the President commit support for the Republican candidate in that --

MR. SNOW: I don't know. Why do you ask? Is there something about the candidate that I should know about that would lead to judgments?

Q: I'm just asking you --

MR. SNOW: No, that's just a --

Q: -- it seems like a very natural thing, why wouldn't he support a member of his own party? Is it because he's well behind in the polls? Is it because the President likes Joe Lieberman? What's -- why not?

MR. SNOW: There may be -- there are a whole host of reasons the President -- I'm just not going to play.

Q: It's not really a game --

MR. SNOW: It's not a game. It's not a game, but I'll -- okay, I'll tell you what. I'll refer you to the political office to give you the full judgments on that. I think you know the situation in Connecticut.

Q: Could you clear up for us the situation regarding whether there was pressure from the U.S. on the British as to when the arrests should be made, or whether there was a disagreement as to when the arrests should be --

MR. SNOW: I'll refer you the Fran Townsend, who denied it all. I just -- I don't have any information beyond what Fran said over the weekend.

Q: One other quick one.

MR. SNOW: Sure.

Q: As far as security on the trains is concerned, we know that trains have been targeted in other countries by al Qaeda-type terrorists. I took Amtrak on Friday; there is no security whatsoever on our trains. Are we going to do anything about that?

MR. SNOW: I'll refer that to Homeland Security. I think they may have a different take on it.

Q: Following on Keith's question, so we should not routinely assume that the President is supporting the Republican nominee --

MR. SNOW: I think there's some peculiar characteristics going on in the Republican Party with the President candidate, and why don't you wait and see what happens?

Q: What are those characteristics?

MR. SNOW: I think I was asking you and you wouldn't play, so --

Q: Are there any other states where there are peculiar characteristics, or is this one unique?

MR. SNOW: I think this one may be unique. But we'll find out. Look, I know what you're trying to do and it's great and it's great fun, but --

Q: -- get an answer.

MR. SNOW: Yes, well, they know the answer.

Go ahead.

Q: Back to Victoria's question, apparently, Amtrak has put in place some things, how passengers get tickets, but that is the only thing. As Victoria said, there are no metal or -- detectors. There are no security agents on the trains. And former Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater, last week, said that Amtrak is one of the vulnerabilities of this fight, as well as the port. So what next --

MR. SNOW: Rather than trying to get me to answer a question that I don't have the information on, I really would refer you to Homeland Security. I know that there have been efforts and they have been documented in the past for dealing with trains. I'm just -- A, I'm not going to go into operational detail, and B, honestly, April, I just -- I don't have the background to answer your questions.

Q: We saw what happened in Madrid, and we saw what happened in --

MR. SNOW: There's always concern about terrorism. But in terms of the specifics of how we're handling the train situation, I'm just not briefed up. I can't -- I don't want to do you the disservice of dancing around it and trying to pretend I know something I don't know.

Q: Can you ask Homeland --

MR. SNOW: Why don't you --

Q: I will call, but your call will get through faster.

MR. SNOW: I'll facilitate the phone call if you have difficulty. I'll make sure yours just gets right through. (Laughter.)

Mike.

Q: To follow up on Peter's question, is it worrisome or sobering that, given a month, Israel wasn't able to defeat, contain, degrade Hezbollah?

MR. SNOW: Again, I think you guys are trying to keep scorecards based on impressions. I don't know -- if you can tell me exactly what the situation is on the ground and precisely how Hezbollah has been affected, then you ought to ask the Israelis about that. That is an Israeli strategic question.

The concern of this administration, from the start, has been very clear: to try to lay the basis for dealing with the root cause, which is Hezbollah aggression, and also to put in place a force that is going to be able to deter and deal with that aggression in the future. But you are asking me to render judgment on a military operation in which we play no part, and therefore, it's simply inappropriate for me to be entertaining such questions. You can call the Israeli embassy or you can call the Israeli military and try to get their own judgments on this, but it is not something that is of germane concern for us.

Q: No, it's just in the past you've said it was part of the global war on terror, and that's --

MR. SNOW: And it is part of the global war on terrorism. But what you're asking for is an operational assessment of what's been going on with the Israelis and Hezbollah. I think what you were asking me to do was to assess what you considered the military objectives on the part of Israel and how we would assess their success in meeting those goals. And my point is that's a question for them and not for me.

Q: But, Tony, would you like to see Hezbollah degraded?

MR. SNOW: We would like to see Hezbollah stop committing acts of terror. We also would like to see Hezbollah take the political path rather than the terror path.

Q: Don't you want to see them disarmed?

Q: But not militarily degraded --

MR. SNOW: Disarmament is something that will be the responsibility of the sovereign government of Lebanon with the assistance of international forces. It is part of the resolution, as it was part of Resolution 1559. So the answer is, yes, we would like to see that happen. But it is not something that's going to happen overnight. It is going to take concerted action on the part of the government of Lebanon and also on the part of the forces that are there operating in conjunction with and in support of the Lebanese armed forces.

Q: Tony, did the President have a chance to see "60 Minutes" last night, and/or do you have a reaction to the Iranian President's statement that their program is civil and it's this country that wants to make bombs out of --

MR. SNOW: Well, I think it's pretty clear that the international community disagrees, as having been expressed with the U.N. Security Council resolution, and also the P3 plus one, which we're also working in conjunction with the Iranians. What we have said is, if you want it to be civil, we're perfectly willing to support that; let's do it in a way that it can be verifiable and let's move forward.

Also, furthermore, if it's guaranteed -- we don't have any problem with the peaceful, civil use of nuclear energy in Iran. As a matter of fact, we've been encouraging it for a number of countries, to eliminate the global dependence on oil or the addiction to oil. Having said that, it is of sufficient concern to a number of countries, with the situation with centrifuges and some of the other things, that if the Iranians do, in fact, want to make it clear that they're interested in civil -- not only can they sit down at the table, not only can they stop the enrichment and reprocessing-related activities with regard to those centrifuges, but there will be willing support for Western nations to help them develop peaceful civil nuclear power. And in addition there are any number of other inducements -- economic, cultural, social, political, and otherwise. And we've made that clear to the Iranians, and we hope that President Ahmadinejad will take us up on it.

Q: Do you think the President watched the interview?

MR. SNOW: I have no idea. I didn't ask him this morning.

Q: Thank you.

MR. SNOW: Okay. Thank you.

END 10:46 EDT

(end transcript)

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Local Efforts in AIDS Prevention Growing, U.S. Official Says
(Community involvement is cornerstone of U.S. AIDS prevention effort) (550)

By Kathryn McConnell
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Community efforts in developing countries focused on combating HIV/AIDS are "strong and growing," says the top U.S. HIV/AIDS official.

Results of those efforts, implemented in partnership with the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), are depicted in *Voices of Hope*, a new documentary film from PEPFAR.

Mark Dybul, U.S. Global AIDS coordinator, introduced the documentary August 9 at a showing in Washington. The film is being distributed to U.S. embassies worldwide for presentation to local audiences. *Voices of Hope* was released just days before the opening of the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto, the world's largest meeting of AIDS scientists, researchers, policymakers and advocates.

AIDS relief is succeeding because leaders of the more than 120 countries that receive PEPFAR support are providing leadership in meeting the health needs of their nations in ways that are successful and sustainable, according to PEPFAR documents.

"Local health officials set the strategy and we [the United States] are supporting them," President Bush has said.

In *Voices of Hope*, HIV-positive people from seven PEPFAR countries talk about how prevention, treatment and care have affected their lives positively. Because of leadership inspired by the U.S. relief program, "for millions it is the dawn of a new day," says the film's narration. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060809154709cmretrop0.7655451>).)

PEPFAR is a five-year, \$15 billion multifaceted approach to combating HIV/AIDS around the world. The program helps people "build their self-confidence," says a health care worker in Uganda featured in the film.

Voices of Hope describes how local outreach efforts, including the involvement of traditional healers and faith-based organizations, are helping men and women of all ages begin to openly discuss HIV/AIDS and embrace the "ABC approach" to prevention -- Abstinence, Being faithful in relationships and using Condoms.

One successful approach to prevention is the early testing of pregnant women for HIV and beginning of anti-retroviral drug treatment for women who test positive, preventing them from passing the virus to their babies.

Another means of HIV prevention described in the film is ensuring the safety of local blood supplies used for transfusions. The documentary also presents HIV-positive people who are being treated with accessible, free drugs that are extending their lives.

Programs funded under PEPFAR also teach people infected with HIV how to properly follow the drug regimen.

In the film, a Ugandan man describes how his weight had dropped to just 45 kilograms after he developed AIDS. Since he began regularly taking the anti-retroviral drug treatment provided by PEPFAR, he has regained strength, has decided to seek more education, and, again, feels hope for the future.

"Such a change we could not have imagined ... from so many dying to so many going back to work," after receiving the treatment, says the Ugandan health care worker.

Additional information (<http://www.state.gov/s/gac/>) about PEPFAR is available on the State Department Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Web site.

Other sources of information are the Web sites of the public-private partnership, Global Fund (<http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/>) to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the Global Business Coalition (<http://www.businessfightsaids.org/site/pp.asp?c=gwKXJfNVJtF&b=1008711>) on HIV/AIDS.

For ongoing coverage, see HIV/AIDS (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/hiv_aids.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

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